

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA  
COURT TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## STRATEGIC PLAN FOR COURT TECHNOLOGY

### Introduction

In 1995, the Judicial Council adopted the Report of the Court Technology Task Force as its strategic technology plan. At the direction of the Judicial Council, the Court Technology Advisory Committee (CTC) has updated that report by preparing a new Strategic Plan for Court Technology. The plan reflects the CTC's commitment to strategic planning as an ongoing responsibility.

In reassessing the goals set forth in the Report of the Court Technology Task Force, the committee considered recent changes within the judicial branch, particularly those brought about by trial court funding, innovations in technology, and Judicial Council governance policies adopted in March 1998 that focus "on the ends to be achieved rather than the means for achieving those ends."

The result is a new plan that simplifies the more complex structure of the task force report by defining five broad strategic topics that are logically discrete but complementary: planning, technology infrastructure, court management systems, information, and communications. Although these topics may be developed in terms of short-, intermediate-, or long-term objectives, the plan maintains a focus on general ends rather than specific means. Unlike the task force report, the plan has no section on projects and funding.

The committee believes that the five topics included in the strategic plan — planning, technology infrastructure, court management systems, information, and communications — express essential characteristics of the judicial branch, a relationship delineated in the chart below.

## THE JUDICIAL BRANCH

<i>ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS</i>	<i>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</i>
<p><b>TRADITIONAL/FAIRNESS</b> The judicial preserves the symbolic dignity of the court, a tradition that its constituents value and expect to be maintained.</p> <p>The judicial system is gauged by how fair and neutral it is.</p> <p>The judicial branch deals with society's differences in an unbiased manner. Societal differences can arise from ignorance, indifference, misfeasance, or malfeasance. The judicial branch is developing sensitivity to rights that were previously disenfranchised, but this sensitivity can also bring more conflict.</p> <p>Courts are in crisis and need more effective tools and techniques to manage their work.</p>	<p><b>PLANNING</b> Technology must preserve or even enhance a person's ability to be heard in a civil environment.</p> <p>Computers should be used to enhance fairness, quality of decisions, and efficiency, but not to replace judges.</p> <p>Globalization of cultures brings many conflicting expectations. Using computer information is a way to identify real differences and means of reconciling them.</p> <p>Realistic plans for bringing computers into individual courts must be developed.</p>
<p><b>TIMELINESS</b> The courts must make timely determinations. If the public thinks court processes are too slow, it loses confidence in the courts.</p> <p>Courts are understaffed.</p>	<p><b>TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE</b> Technology can be used to expedite resolution of issues, whether they are simple or complex.</p> <p>There must be sufficient staff to handle the workload and technology.</p>
<p><b>RESPONSIVENESS</b> The judicial branch needs flexibility to respond to changing conditions and expectations, such as public desire for speed, access, and language accommodation.</p> <p>The rule of law creates and maintains the respect and confidence of the community and the citizenry at large.</p>	<p><b>COURT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS</b> Court management systems need to be developed to respond to changing conditions and expectations.</p> <p>Technology should be utilized to create an accessible repository of the law, including interpretation of statutes and constitutional and case law.</p>

<p><b>INFORMATION</b> The judicial system provides the process that determines the information that is relevant to a dispute, gathers the information, presents the information for an unbiased assessment, and justly allocates parties' rights.</p> <p>This information is used to make decisions that reflect common sense.</p>	<p><b>INFORMATION</b> Technological advances that have decreased the cost of gathering information have significantly increased the volume of information available. Technology should now be used to process and distribute this information.</p> <p>Information on which the judiciary depends to make decisions must be correct.</p>
<p><b>ACCESS</b> Courts must ensure access and the perception of access to all.</p>	<p><b>COMMUNICATIONS</b> Technology should be used to enhance communication among the courts and with its partners in the judicial system, including the public.</p>

In articulating these strategic objectives, the CTC is mindful of the numerous forces that, because of their impact on the judiciary, will affect the achievement of the objectives. These forces influence and shape technological possibilities and the priorities in which actions are taken. They range from the specific needs of individuals who work in courts and use court services, to legislative mandates affecting sentencing, technological innovations in Silicon Valley, and political, business, and societal issues.

With this new Strategic Plan for Court Technology, the CTC aspires to bring a cohesive, integrated approach to directing technology investment in the judicial branch in the coming years. The committee believes that the plan establishes the appropriate ends to be achieved as technology is applied to better serve all those who use the courts of California.

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### GOAL I. PLANNING

Develop and maintain a strategic plan for the effective application of technology to the needs of the judicial branch and the justice system that is fully consonant with strategic planning efforts of the Judicial Council and that

- is based on an accurate assessment of need;
- reflects a current understanding of relevant technological opportunities (e.g., those possible on the Internet);
- realistically acknowledges external constraints, such as funding and market forces;
- sees problems and opportunities in a broad context;
- seeks to reduce duplicative effort and expense through coordination of common objectives across organizational boundaries;
- anticipates the disadvantages that technology can create for some individuals and steps that will remedy them;
- includes input from a broad range of constituencies;
- ensures availability of judicial branch services in an emergency or after a disaster; and
- can serve as the basis of a tactical plan developed and implemented by staff.

#### A. TECHNOLOGY PLANNING

Provide the tools to guide technology needs assessment and implementation in the judicial branch.

##### Short-term objectives

Provide the courts and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) with software to develop, maintain, compile, and query local strategic technology plans and technology profiles.

Establish criteria for regular Court Technology Advisory Committee (CTC) oversight of state technology initiatives in the judicial branch.

### Intermediate-term objectives

Identify statutes and rules of court that impede the procurement or use of beneficial new technologies and recommend appropriate changes.

Develop a tactical plan to guide implementation of the goals and objectives of this strategic plan and the strategic plans of the trial courts.

## **B. BUSINESS RESUMPTION PLANNING**

Assist with planning and resources required to maintain technology-dependent mission-critical operations in an emergency or following a disaster.

### Short-term objectives

Develop model plans that specify the technology essential to mission-critical operations, a strategy for deploying redundant technology to maintain mission-critical operations, and manual alternatives in the event that redundant systems are unavailable.

### Intermediate-term objectives

Assist courts in incorporating model plans into their strategic plans.

## **GOAL II. TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE**

Design and put into place an infrastructure that will provide the staff, hardware, software, and technology management necessary to support the computing services and telecommunications required to meet the information technology needs of the judicial branch.

### **A. MANAGEMENT**

Technology management is management from a statewide perspective of the technology that supports the work of the judicial branch. It includes coordinating systems development and information-sharing, implementing new technologies that can be widely used within the branch, and advocating adequate resources to support judicial branch systems.

#### 1. New Technology Investment

Promote the testing, development, and implementation of beneficial new technology.

### Short-term objectives

Define a minimally acceptable level of court automation and assist each court in attaining it.

Develop and maintain minimum specifications for new hardware to be acquired by the courts.

Develop and test standards that will expedite certification of the record in capital cases and facilitate use of the record by the court.

Intermediate-term objectives

Develop and test standards that will expedite submission of the record on appeal in all cases and facilitate use of the record by the court.

Develop functional specifications for “smart” courtrooms as new court facilities are constructed and older facilities are retrofitted by providing the technological infrastructure for security, presentation of and access to evidence, court reporting, case record preparation, legal research, and other ancillary systems.

2. Technology Coordination

Facilitate collaboration on common technology objectives within and outside the judicial branch, including coordinating the efforts of courts with similar needs.

Short-term objectives

Establish procedures for assisting other advisory committees with technological issues.

Create an easily accessible clearinghouse of technology information of interest to the courts (e.g., on products, services, education, and pilot efforts).

Use clearinghouse information to create common opportunities for procurement of goods and services.

Initiate collaborative efforts with federal, state, and local government agencies.

Long-term objectives

Establish a regional approach for training and other support related to statewide technological initiatives.

3. Technology Resources

Identify the resources required for judicial branch technological initiatives and recommend their allocation.

Short-term objectives

Identify funding sources other than legislative appropriations, such as public and private sector grants, joint ventures, and federal funds.

Intermediate-term objectives

Provide assistance in obtaining funding, particularly federal and other grants, for information technology projects.

## B. STAFFING

Design a staffing structure that provides highly specialized central staff that can assist courts in the implementation and use of technology. Create and operate staff training programs for existing and new judicial personnel and establish efficient and economical methods of delivering the training through the use of video, Internet, and Intranet.

### Short-term objectives

Develop a profile of the skills and qualifications required to effectively utilize current technologies (e.g., those available through the Internet for court Web sites and communications).

Assist courts in meeting their critical staffing needs for Web and Internet services.

Post job openings for court technology personnel on the Web.

Use consulting contracts to fulfill staffing needs as required.

Apply telecommuting technology and management practices to enable judicial officers and staff to work off site when doing so will have no detrimental impact on court services and will have positive effects on court productivity and the working environment.

### Intermediate-term objective

Develop plans for recruitment, development, and retention of all technical staff, and use them to secure adequate staffing and salaries.

## C. TRAINING

### Short-term objectives

Using the skills and qualifications profile, develop training materials to assist in building skills.

Identify existing staff who can train trainers in their courts.

### Intermediate-term objective

Provide a centralized training facility to which courts can send personnel to be trained.

## **GOAL III. COURT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

Assist courts in development, acquisition, implementation, and use of technology to improve their management of court operations and resources.

### A. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Establish a judicial branch technology resource center at the AOC to assist courts in procuring, applying, and testing new technology.

### Short-term objectives

Draft a mission statement, objectives, and governance structure for the center.

Identify minimal staff and other resources necessary to establish the center.

Enlist court administrators and technical personnel to oversee the specific projects of the center.

### Intermediate-term objectives

Develop functional standards for technologies that support strategic objectives of the Judicial Council and its advisory committees.

Create a virtual computer lab by providing interactive remote access to the resources of the center.

Test new user interfaces to judicial branch systems.

## B. TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE TO COURTS

Provide AOC staff and related resources to assist the courts in developing and implementing state-sponsored technology initiatives.

### Short-term objectives

Identify viable case management systems for courts of various sizes.

Develop model case management systems that resolve year 2000 problems and meet other judicial branch requirements.

Support funding of case management systems that meet Judicial Council standards.

### Long-term objective

Identify the common functions required for court operations, and draft specifications for applications that perform those functions.

## C. RESOURCES FOR JUDGES

Develop resources to assist judges in the use of information technology and the performance of their duties.

### Short-term objective

Identify online calendar software that integrates individual and organizational schedules.

### Intermediate-term objectives

Explore and test expert system applications, including calendaring, alternative processes, and time shifting.

Explore and test applications that make case files electronically available to judges and court staff.

## **GOAL IV. INFORMATION**

Use technology to collect, process, and share the information that courts need to process their cases, manage their resources, and meet the needs of the public, their partners in the justice system, and others with legitimate needs, and encourage and fund innovative, cost-effective pilot projects that can be used throughout the judicial branch.

### **A. INFORMATION QUALITY**

Establish and support the implementation of standards for accurate, complete, and timely information.

#### Short-term objective

Using strategic plans and technology profiles, target training and implementation efforts that meet Judicial Council standards.

#### Intermediate-term objectives

Ensure the accuracy of statistical reports through the implementation of Judicial Branch Statistical Information System (JBSIS) standards.

Develop and make available to all courts a Web-based interactive database of case-related statistical data.

### **B. INFORMATION COLLECTION**

Capture electronically at its source and in a usable form that eliminates any need for its subsequent reentry the data needed for case and court management, whether discrete items, forms, or documents.

#### Short-term objectives

Encourage courts to submit statistical reports via the California Judicial Network (CJN).

Process selected Judicial Council forms via the Web.

On a pilot basis, with a view to developing statewide functional standards, electronically process the components of the record on appeal: briefs, motions, clerks' transcripts, reporters' transcripts, and related information.

### **C. INFORMATION SHARING**

Make justice system information more accessible through the use of common, well-understood technology.

#### Short-term objectives

When legally permissible, surmount physical barriers by incorporating interactive multimedia technology into all justice proceedings and administrative functions to facilitate participation, promote efficiency, and reduce costs.

Develop and seek opportunities for facilitating the sharing of needed information by working with government at the local, state, and federal levels, as well as with others in the justice system.

#### Intermediate-term objectives

Explore technological opportunities for interacting with the public, such as Internet chatrooms, television, and kiosks.

Test electronic records access and forms filing.

Identify the special needs of those for whom technological interfaces impede access, whether because of cultural or personal limitations.

Provide courts with direct access to a statistical reporting system via the CJN.

Develop assistance for users whose access to courts is impeded by technological interfaces.

Begin dialogue on legal and psychological issues raised by virtual assemblages, in which judicial officers and some or all parties and witnesses are present virtually rather than physically.

#### Long-term objectives

Develop clear and consistent policies governing access to electronic records.

Provide electronic access to court records to the fullest extent permitted by law and Judicial Council policies.

### **GOAL V. COMMUNICATIONS**

Establish communication links that meet the needs of the judicial branch, its partners in the justice system, the public, and others with legitimate needs, through implementation of technology and outreach programs.

#### **A. COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK**

Create a comprehensive and integrated information distribution network.

#### Short-term objectives

On a pilot basis, test innovative technology for a judicial branch network (California Judicial Network or CJN).

Foster maximal use of Web technology as an accessible means of sharing information. Assist trial courts that have few or no technical staff members to develop Web pages containing information commonly requested by users of the courts and the public.

#### Intermediate-term objectives

Implement a judicial branch network (CJN) statewide throughout the judicial branch. Create a secure and interactive judicial branch Intranet to send and receive the information required for routine and nonroutine operations, such as reports and surveys on budget, fiscal activities, human resources, and caseload; to support audio and video communications; and to link to external resources.

#### Long-term objectives

Extend the CJN to meet the needs of others in the justice system.  
Extend the CJN to meet the needs of the public and those who use the courts.

### B. OUTREACH

Develop broad support within and outside the judicial branch for improving the delivery of justice through technology. Within the judicial branch, promote new technologies that enable the branch to meet its responsibilities more effectively. Outside the branch, develop opportunities for noncourt participants in the justice system and for the private sector to contribute expertise and resources to technological solutions to judicial branch problems.

#### Short-term objectives

Create and maintain programs to educate judges, managers, technical staff, and end users about technologies that can assist them in their work.  
Advocate technologies, such as the multimedia capabilities of the Internet, that improve delivery of educational programs.  
Develop regular liaison with high-level executives in technology enterprises.  
Encourage law school and public administration faculties to develop programs that apply technology to the problems of the courts.  
Invite judges and court staff to collaborate with the committee in meeting its responsibilities, not only to ensure support for the committee's work, but also to guarantee that local interests are well represented.

#### Long-term objectives

Obtain feedback from the courts, its partners in the justice system, and its customers to assess the efforts of the CTC and suggest how they might be improved.

**COURT TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PARTICIPATING  
IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT OF SEPTEMBER 25–27, 1997**

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